

# Navigating the Red-Blue Divide: Clergy and Congregations in Collaboration

Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade

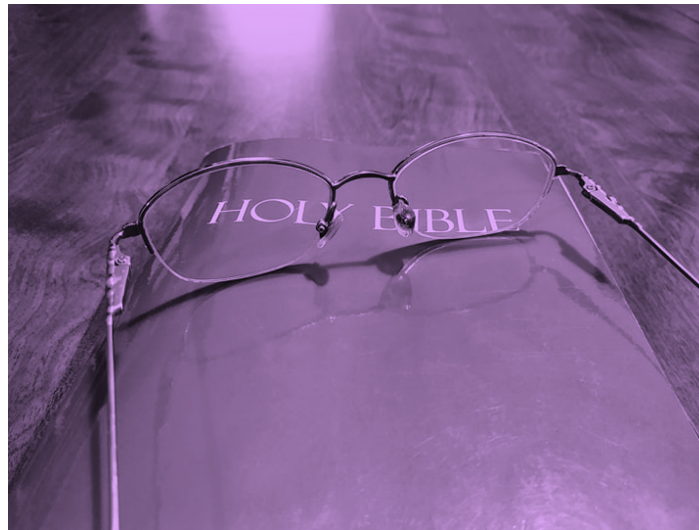
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# Let's learn from each other!

## Applying the Dialogical Lens to Joshua 22

- Discuss Joshua Chapter 22.
- Share one “a-ha” moment about what you learned from this passage about dialogue and the people of God.



The push-back congregations may  
receive when addressing social issues:

**“You’re being too political.”**

Which is a code word for . . . ?

The push-back clergy may receive  
when addressing social issues:

**“You’re being too political.”**

Which is a code word for . . . ?

**You’re making me  
uncomfortable.**

**You’re calling me to  
account, and I don’t  
like it.**

**Don’t challenge my  
comfort zone.**

**I don’t agree with you.**

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “POLITICS”?



The root of “politics” is the Greek word *polis*, which refers to “community” and “citizens.”

There is a difference between being *political* and being *partisan*.





# We can't discuss "politics" in church because . . .

- You're making me uncomfortable.
- I don't agree with your position.
- You're crossing "church-and-state" boundaries that I think should stay in place.
- Don't challenge my comfort zone.
- You're taking sides when you should remain neutral.
- You're challenging me (and the media that informs my position), and I don't appreciate it.
- I come to church to escape or get a break from the world, not to further engage.
- This is too complicated to talk about or hear preached.
- It's too difficult/painful for me to think about this.

# Categories of reactions:

- Emotional
- Relational
- Principled
- Some combination of the three

# Emotional, Relational, or Principled?

- You're making me uncomfortable.
- I don't agree with your position.
- You're crossing "church-and-state" boundaries that I think should stay in place.
- Don't challenge my comfort zone.
- You're taking sides when you should remain neutral.
- You're challenging me (and the media that informs my position), and I don't appreciate it.
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# Political? Yes! Partisan? No!

- While there is ongoing debate about the relationship between government and religion, the First Amendment was intended to prevent the establishment of a state church.
- It did not state that churches could not address issues that involve government.
- Thus, it would be inaccurate for someone to accuse a preacher of violating the separation of church and state by preaching a sermon that addresses contemporary issues of public concern – as long as the sermon was not taking part in *partisan* politics and advocating for a particular party or candidate.

# Instead of using the word “politics,” try using one of these terms:

- Issues of public concern
- Community matters
- The common good
- Civic concerns
- Communal issues
- Societal matters
- Discerning public issues
- How we live together in community

So . . . how *can* we talk about issues of public concern that affect congregations and communities in a way that finds common ground and builds up instead of tearing apart?

The basic political question :  
“WHAT KIND OF COMMUNITY  
SHALL WE BE?”



The process by which we answer this question is politics.

The question  
always arises:

What is just  
in this situation and  
at this time?

The core of biblical justice is care for the neighbor



- It's not that the church or that Christians have greater insight into what we must do, but the church lives by hope.
- If Jesus is risen, we are being called into a future he will bring.



What shall we do?

- *What kind of community will we be?*
  - The answer is complex.
  - It necessitates public discourse.
  - For Christians, it necessitates discernment, dialogue.
- For pastors, it necessitates prophetic preaching.



# 6 MORAL FRAMEWORKS

CARE  
V.  
HARM

FAIRNESS  
V.  
CHEATING

LIBERTY  
V.  
OPPRESSION

LOYALTY  
V.  
BETRAYAL

AUTHORITY  
V.  
SUBVERSION

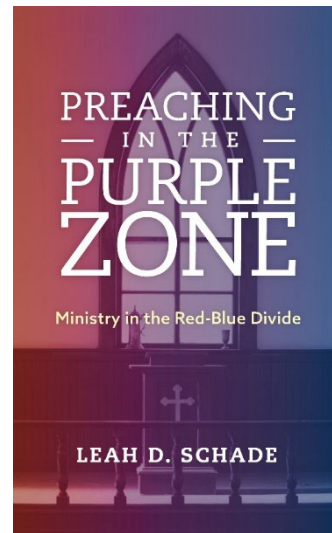
SANCTITY  
V.  
DEGRADATION

Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Disagree About Religion and Politics* (Vintage Books, 2013)



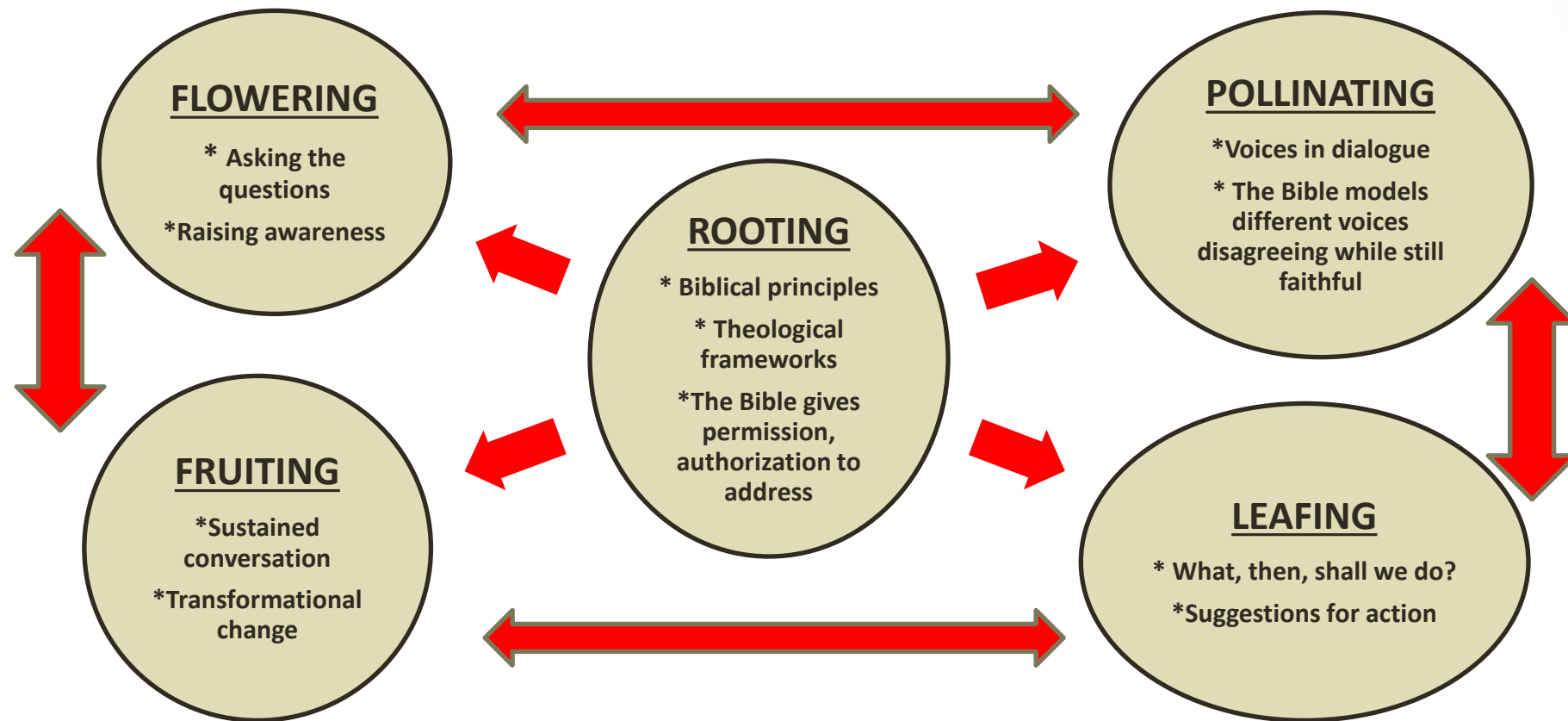
Questions so far?

# SERMON – DIALOGUE – SERMON METHOD



Developed by Leah D. Schade

# FIVE PATHS TO PROPHETIC PREACHING



From: *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide* by Leah D. Schade (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

# **SERMON – DIALOGUE – SERMON METHOD**

## **Sermon #1 – “Prophetic Invitation to Dialogue” (Introduces the public issue)**



# Sermon #1

## “Prophetic Invitation to Dialogue”

- **\*\*KEY\*\*** - *The preacher DOES NOT take a stand on the issue one way or another*
  - Instead – draws attention to the issue, raises awareness
    - Thus “flowering”
  - Notes various voices and perspectives - which the Bible also models
    - Thus “rooting” in the biblical principle of **dialogue**
  - Invites listeners to a deliberative dialogue session about the topic
    - Thus “pollinating”
  - Tone = curious, wondering, attentive to what/who God is calling us to hear/see
    - Thus “fruiting” – seeds of transformational change

# Facilitate a Deliberative Dialogue

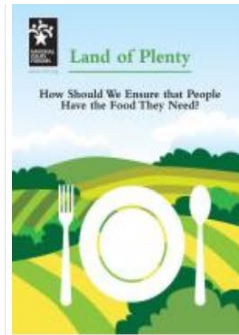


Kettering Foundation and the National Issues Forum Institute – [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)

# National Issues Forums Institute & The Kettering Foundation



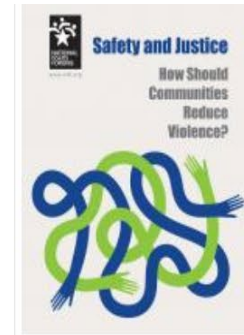
ISSUE ADVISORY -  
What Should We Do  
about the Opioid  
Epidemic?



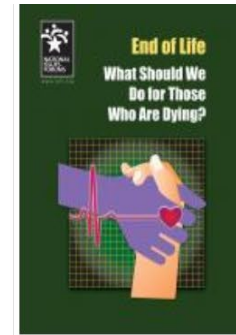
Land of Plenty



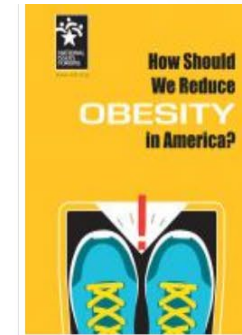
Energy Choices



Safety and Justice



End of Life



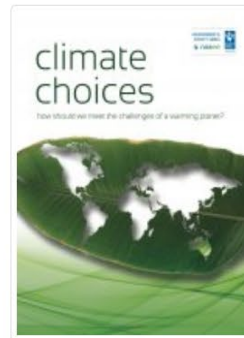
How Should We  
Reduce Obesity in  
America?



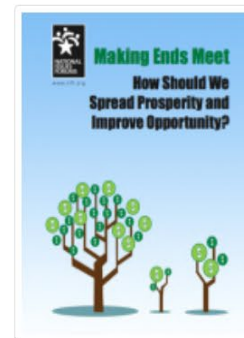
ISSUE ADVISORY - How  
Can We Stop Mass  
Shootings In Our  
Communities? (2016)



ISSUE ADVISORY -  
Infectious Disease  
Outbreaks: How  
Should We Keep Our  
Communities Safe?



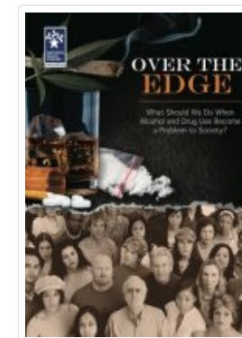
Climate Choices



Making Ends Meet:  
How Should We  
Spread Prosperity and  
Improve Opportunity?



Health Care



Over the Edge

## Issue Guides

# Four Key Tasks of Deliberative Dialogue Session

## ► Convening

- Seek an inclusive and diverse group of participants
- Ground rules for respectful engagement

## ► Facilitating & Deliberating

- Provide neutral and skilled moderation for participants to deliberate and make choices/judgments

## ► Issue Analysis

- What's at stake for *you* in this issue?
- Three approaches are weighed, pros and cons
- Emerging with *common values* that arise from the discussion

## ► Identify next steps

- Based on shared values, what are two or three things we can agree might be next steps?
  - Continue dialogue; bring in other voices; educate; advocacy; etc.



# **SERMON – DIALOGUE – SERMON METHOD – cont.**

## **Sermon #2 – “Communal Prophetic Proclamation”**

**(Incorporates wisdom from Deliberative Dialogue  
session into a more prophetic sermon)**

# Sermon #2

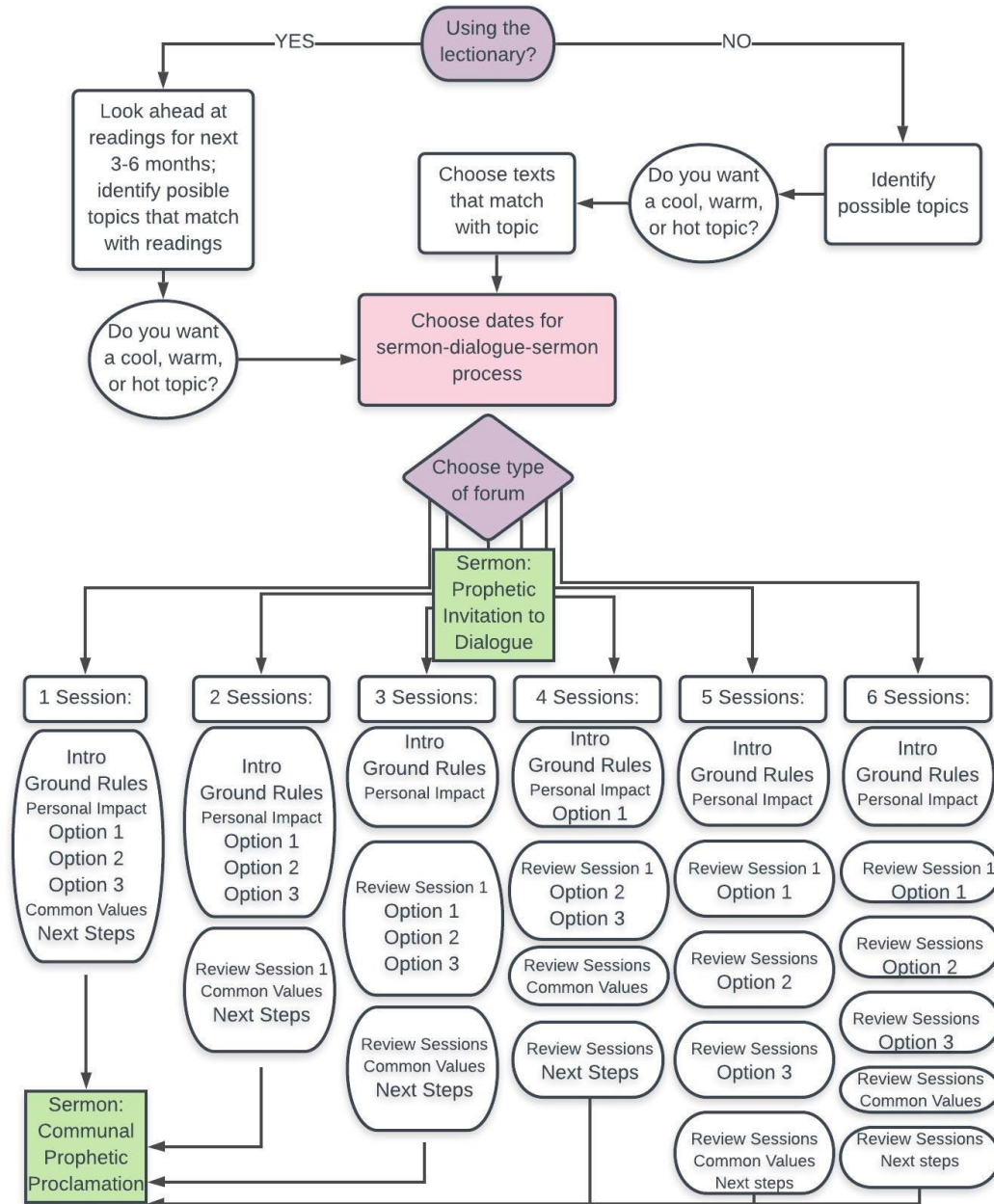
## “Communal Prophetic Proclamation”

- **\*\*KEY\*\*** - *The preacher DOES NOT impose her/his position, but raises up the discernment of the group*
  - Shares what insights emerged from deliberative dialogue session about the topic
    - Thus “pollinating”
  - Lifts up shared values that reflect biblical witness
    - Thus “rooting” in biblical principles
  - Offers possible next steps and identifies them as God working through the church in the midst of this difficult issue during this fractious time
    - Thus “leafing”
  - Tone = “pastorally prophetic,” inviting further conversation, affirming presence of God/Jesus/HS
    - Thus “fruiting” – changing the culture from one of either avoidance or divisiveness to one of conversation and discernment



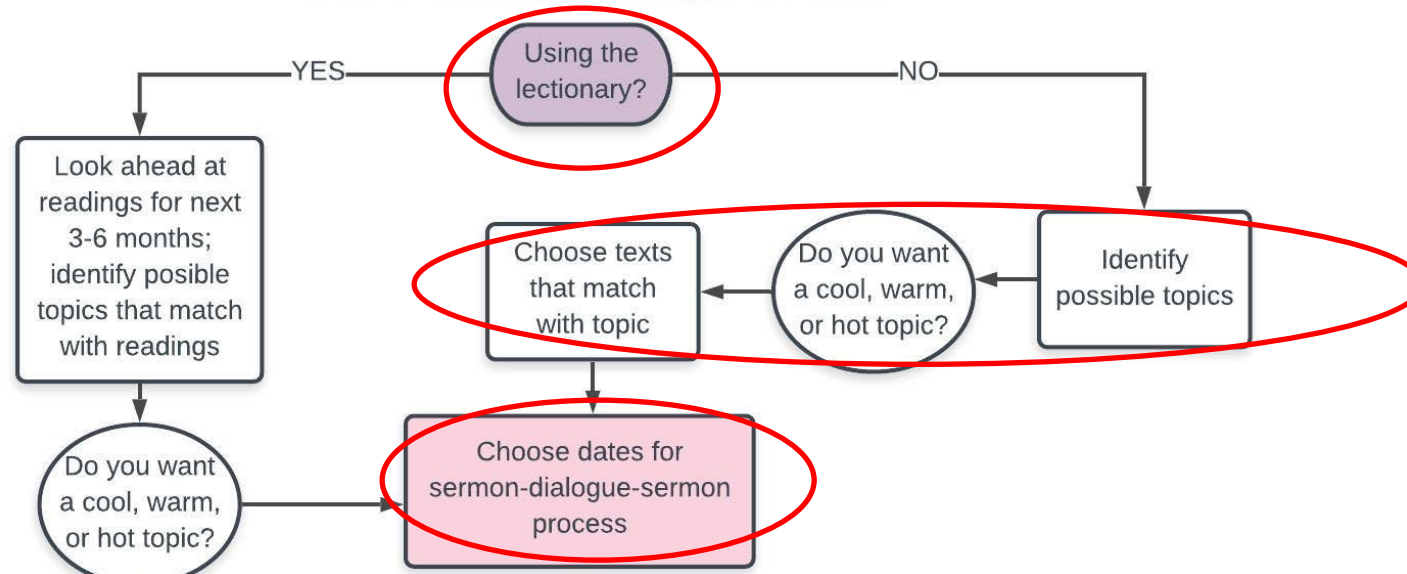
# SERMON-DIALOGUE-SERMON PROCESS FLOWCHART

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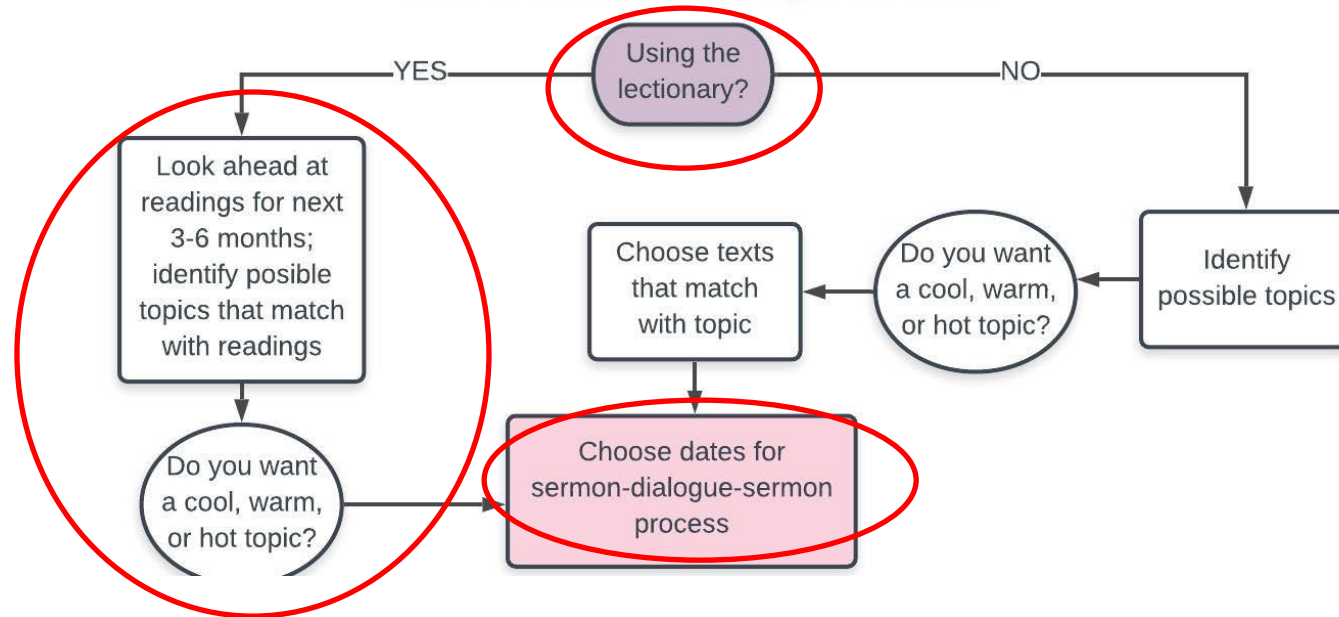
## SERMON-DIALOGUE-SERMON PROCESS FLOWCHART

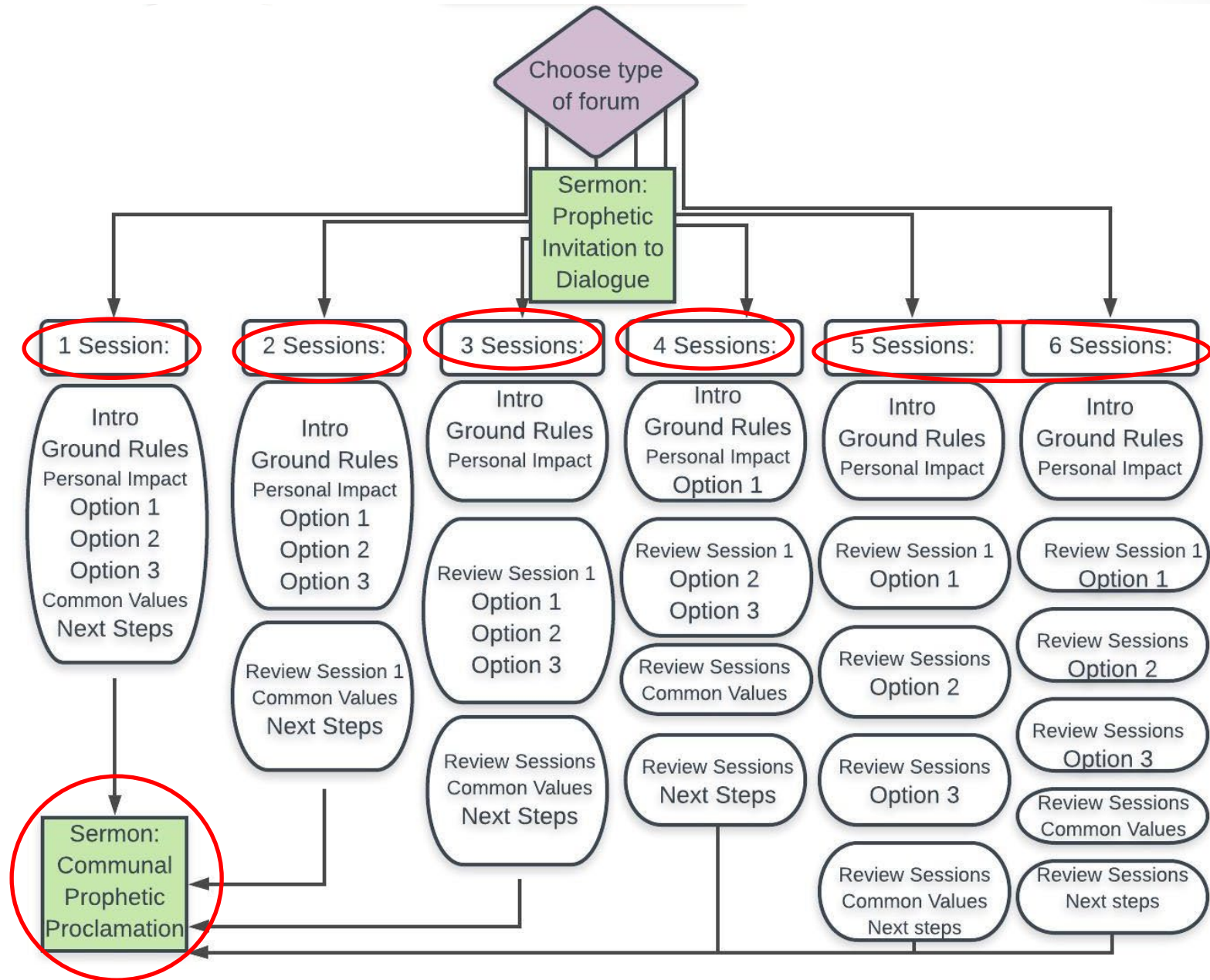
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## SERMON-DIALOGUE-SERMON PROCESS FLOWCHART

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# Over 200 Clergy and Laity Trained in the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method

The leukocytes (“white blood cells”) in the Body of Christ.



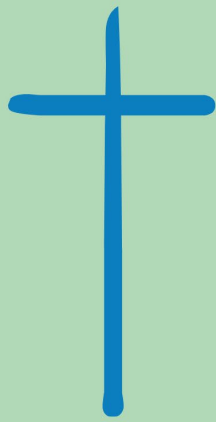


# RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Maintain strong pastoral relationships
- Build a “ramp” to avoid misunderstanding allow for more time to engage
- Sermon-dialogue-sermon method
- Support and training from seminaries, denominational offices, clergy colleague groups, organizations that teach healthy civil discourse





# CLERGY EMERGENCY LEAGUE

RESIST | RECLAIM | RENEW

- **Started in June 2020, The Clergy Emergency League (CEL)** is a grassroots network of more than 2,600 clergy speaking against the abuses of power at the federal, state, and local levels.
- We repudiate the fusion of politics with radical, right-wing, fundamentalist Christianity. And we denounce the growing power of racist white nationalism and a militarized police state.
- We provide support, accountability, resources, and networking for clergy to prophetically minister in their congregations and the public square in this time of political upheaval, social unrest, and partisan division.
- <https://www.clergyemergencyleague.com/>
- Facebook group for clergy (be sure to answer vetting questions to gain admittance):  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3268854966534981>
- Facebook page for anyone to “like” and follow:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ClergyEmergencyLeague>

**WANT TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE  
DEALING WITH  
COMMUNITY CONCERNS?**



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**Developing Green Congregations**  
Presented by Dr. Leah Schade and Rev. Carol Devine



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